

Why Christians Keep SUNDAY As Their SABBATH DAY?

By **CONRAD BARRETT, PASTOR**

It started with Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. According to the scriptures Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. Matthew said "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." (Matthew 28:1, 2) In Mark's account of the resurrection, he stated "when the Sabbath was past Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome had brought sweet spices that they might anoint Him. And very early in the morning of the first day of the week they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: "for it was a very great." (Mark 16:1, 2, 4) Luke stated that upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning they came to the sepulcher and found the stone rolled away. (Luke 24:1-3) John stated, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher." (John 20:1)

It is obvious that Jesus was raised from the dead sometimes during the early morning after the Jewish Sabbath. There is no report of resurrection activity during the time of the Sabbath.

Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples and others on the day following the Sabbath, which is known as the first day of the week (Sunday).

Christians began worshipping on Sunday, which was the first day of the week shortly after the resurrection. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians that upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:2) Since Malachi tells us the storehouse is the place to which we should bring our tithes and offerings, it is obvious that Paul is speaking about the church here as being the place to bring our gifts and that we should do so on the first day of the week. The Hebrew people took their tithes and offerings to the Temple and used some cities of the Levites as storehouses, too.

In his letter to the Corinthians as stated in the previous paragraph, we find Paul teaching the Corinthians to bring offerings on the first day of the week. Here he included the term "in store" which no doubt relates to the storehouse or church.

It is true that many of the early Hebrew Christians continued to worship on the Old Jewish Sabbath while others chose to worship on the first day of the week. Paul was one of those who worshipped on Sunday according to his writing in 1 Corinthians.

Paul was a contemporary of Jesus and was taught the fundamentals of the Jewish religion and was a zealot in terms of keeping the Jewish law. On the road to Damascus he was converted and became a great Apostle and wrote several New Testament books (letters). In studying his writings, one can easily see him joining in with the New

Christian disciples and freeing himself from old traditions that created a spiritual bondage. He was glad to proclaim: "He whom the Lord makes free is free indeed." The excitement of the resurrection of Jesus happening on Sunday and then Pentecost being on Sunday, as well as the revelation of the resurrected Lord, was enough for Paul and many others to know the first day of the week was a special day, because on that day God had done something spectacular. No doubt it was now a day which God was hallowing. It was a day for rejoicing.

The Jewish Sabbath was a changeable Sabbath. It changed every year at Pentecost to one day later so that every day of the week was observed in a seven-year time frame. Pentecost was the first day after the seventh Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:15-21)

God's original plan for the Sabbath was to help man understand that time was needed not only to rest our bodies, but to rest our souls as well. For that reason He included the commandment to provide a time of blessing for both the body and soul. The soul especially needs to be revived and a stronger fellowship with our Lord is extremely important. If we mechanically keep a special day without doing so in the proper spirit, we have missed the objective altogether.

Man allowed the Sabbath day to become something different than what God intended. Neither God nor man was happy with the arrangement. In fact, the scriptures tell us that "your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure." (Isaiah 1:13) This scripture gives us God's attitude about what was happening on the Sabbath. Instead of being a time of rest for body and soul it became a time of legalistic dimension. The approach to it was negative instead of positive. The "Thy shalt nots" seemed to override the "Thy shalt."

Does worship on Sunday instead of Saturday negate our responsibility for keeping the Sabbath (Sunday) holy? Absolutely not! People who are born again should be examples to all others about our worship intentions. Many Christians are entirely too lax about going to church on Sunday. Some feel free to go or not to go, but this is not what God wants from us. In fact the Bible tells us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some, but the much more as we see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25) The attitude of our hearts toward worship is much more important, though, than just being present and hiding a rebellious heart. We should go to church because we love God, love His house, Love one another, and love to worship.

Satan has deceived a lot of people about their "Sabbath" day. Whether Saturday, or Sunday, we should take worship time seriously. More and more things, which many of us like, are scheduled on Sunday. Family reunions, cemetery gatherings, sports events, are just a few of the many things that hinder us from worshipping on Sunday. The commercial world has exercised an almost free hand as they have encroached on our Sundays. In some instances it's either work or get fired for some very dependable and godly employees. On one hand we have God, conscience and eternity to think about; on the other hand we have to sustain life and families here on earth. It's time we all took a special look at what is happening to our lives and for what purpose. The correct decision is to follow God because eternity is longer than our stay on earth and we must ultimately meet God and answer for how we spent our time on earth as well as how we spent our Sundays.

Christians, by practice, worshipped on Sunday from the earliest days of New Testament times, although some insisted that they were still bound by Jewish law and practiced it.

According to many early church fathers and writers it quickly became the practice of many New Testament believers to worship on Sunday. Paul was among them. He warned in his letter to the Galatians that we could expect some to return to bondage in the celebrations of certain days. The emphasis is to be on God, not on a particular day. Early writers, such as Justin Martyr, 110 A.D., Tertullian 145 A.D., Clement of Alexandria 174 A.D., The Epistle of Barnabas and many others, attest to Christians worshipping on Sunday. It was not a particular church or government that changed the worship day; they only made it legal. Christians were already worshipping on Sunday.

Why then do Christians worship on Sunday? Christians are followers of Christ and since the greatest events which have ever happened to the human family, happened on Sunday, the early Christians began to honor God on the day on which He has done so much for all of us. When we think of the resurrection of Jesus, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Manifestation of Jesus to His disciples all happening on the first day of the week, it was truly a time of new beginning and New Testament revelation.

Should Christians observe Sunday? Yes, they should by honoring our Lord and attending church and worshipping the Lord in spirit and truth. This should be done daily, however, and not just on one particular day of the week.

The Christian is instructed in scripture to observe all the days of the week, by knowing and serving God and by being kind and loving to each other.

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